# Thoreau Society Bulletin

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## Thoreau's "Indian Books" and Bradley Dean's "Broken Task": A Personal Remembrance

*Brianne Keith*

Many of us who belong to the Thoreau Society know that we lost a dear member, Brad Dean, of a heart attack last year. A sudden death almost never seems real when it happens—the harsh circumstances do not allow for preparation of the time to come, and so one feels hard-pressed to digest the fact. We remain in a state of shock. With Brad, a longtime Thoreau scholar, editor of *Faith in Seed* and *Wild Fruits*, and editor of this *Bulletin*, one easily felt in the presence of a true expert, one who passionately, compulsively even, sought an intimate knowledge of Thoreau and all of the mysteries his life presented, and in doing so, made a life of his own. The results of Brad's labors are significant and have helped us to see a fuller picture of a Thoreau that extended beyond writer, transcendentalist, and mystic, to scientist and natural historian.

Brad's professional and personal lives were often mixed. He maintained many personal relationships with Thoreauvians of all walks. To me, he was one of the most significant people in my life, someone whose influence and more importantly, guidance, directly influenced the major events of my life. Conversations with him often waxed philosophical, and during one in particular I remember he said: "Do the things you want to do before life gets in the way." With that wisdom, I resolved to travel to a foreign country alone, an idea I had for so long but could not seem to get off the ground. He was often a source of support for me. What, then, to do with his death, so sudden and unexpected? How to deal with the loss of someone whose presence is so strongly felt? How to fill the gap?

I am still not sure. But Brad's death left more than an emotional gap. Some may know that, before he died, Brad was years-deep in a project to edit the Indian Books, an eleven-volume set of unpublished notebooks Thoreau kept from 1848 to 1860. The Indian Books are currently housed in the Morgan Library and Museum. To my knowledge, there exists only one formal publication of them, and that publication is limited in that it contains only excerpts from this enormous set of notes Thoreau compiled.[1] Brad planned to publish them in full, as part of a multi-volume set of Thoreau's notebooks. Last I heard from Brad, he said his work would be published soon. That work now remains incomplete.

The existence of the Indian Books may be obscure knowledge outside of Thoreau scholarship, but Thoreau's interest in American Indian cultures is not. Anecdotes that tell how Thoreau was able to spot with razor-like precision an arrowhead in a heap of stones are legendary. The quotation from his *Journal*, "Why…make so great ado about the Roman and Greek, and neglect the Indian," is often cited.[2] The Indian Books, then, can be seen as an artifact of this fascination. Thoreau copied extracts from all sorts of texts such as the travel diaries of early explorers, captivity narratives, missionary accounts, and dictionaries. What Thoreau culled from these texts were passages rich with details of the customs, habits, and cultures not only of American Indians but of primitive cultures from all over the world.[3]

What makes these Indian Books unique is their sheer volume. They comprise about 2,800 handwritten pages of material drawn from over five hundred sources. What was Thoreau planning to do, if anything, with these notes? Since the notebooks are just that—notebooks—one can only speculate what Thoreau had intended to do with them. Some scholars believe that Thoreau planned to use them to create a major work about the American Indian.[4] A rough table of contents toward the end of Volume I suggests as much.[5] But nothing on a scale that large was done with them. Instead, the notes became Thoreau's source material for many of his major works. *The Maine Woods*, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, and *Walden* are peppered with observations on American Indian culture that first appeared as notes in the Indian Books.

For Brad, the Indian Books demonstrated yet another aspect of Thoreau's life—his activity as an observer and comparatist of human cultures, or, as an ethnologist. In a lecture Brad gave about the Indian Book project he said:

> When my project is published, I think one of the things that will surprise quite a few people, particularly people who have a more stereotypical notion of Thoreau, is the level of sophistication that Thoreau achieved with his ethnological studies. Prior to this project being published, very few people will have known about Thoreau's

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> study of Native Americans and, as a consequence, when this is fairly well known, a lot of people are going to be set back a bit. And what they're going to find is that Thoreau was very sophisticated. If not the preeminent, certainly among the top ten, I would say.[6]

What Brad was saying was that Thoreau could easily be named one of the top ten ethnologists in the nineteenth century. Other scholars have made similar assessments.[7] Richard Fleck considered the Indian Books to be the "largest body of knowledge of American Indian culture in the nineteenth century," and "in this respect, Thoreau's deep involvement far exceeded any other eighteenth or nineteenth century 'primitivist' including Rousseau or Diderot" (Fleck 3).[8] The nature of the sources sought, and the detached tone with which Thoreau (very seldomly) commented on them suggest that if there was any defined project that Thoreau was following, it was scientific in bent. His intention, it seems, was to compare primitive cultures across the world to arrive at a deeper understanding of what it was to live a life in the "wild."

The concepts of "primitive" and "wildness" were of great importance to Thoreau. *Walden* was largely driven by the impulse to understand the "essential facts" of life, so it is easy to see Thoreau's study of the American Indian culture as an extension of that impulse. To achieve the most authentic acquaintance with the habits and customs of a "primitive" culture, and since he lived in a time when the "red man" was already irrevocably altered by contact with Europeans, Thoreau sought the earliest accounts of contact before they came under the influence of "civilized man." Brad observed that:

> Thoreau seems to have been intent on studying like a scholar would study the indigenous cultures to try to find the embodiment of the wild... Civilization entails a certain amount of self consciousness and I think Thoreau was trying to step away from that with his idea of wildness. I think for Thoreau the red man, as he called them, was the wild man in the best sense of the term. So he wanted to see if he could understand the way the Native Americans related to their environment before they learned how to relate to their environment from the white folks who were coming over.

The latter part of Thoreau's life is certainly marked by a tendency to accumulate "facts" about natural phenomena to understand them in as objective a way as possible. Brad saw the Indian Books as a collection of "facts" accumulated with the same intention—to understand human needs as objectively as possible.

My own introduction to the Indian Books came during the summer of 1998, when I was an intern at the Thoreau Institute. I got to know Brad during my breaks when I would wander down to the library where he worked. Brad, in characteristic fashion, would cryptically ask me questions about Thoreau, never making it clear what was to be gained from the answers. Looking back, I suspect he was testing how deep my apparent interest was in a writer in whose memory the organization for which I worked was founded. Before long Brad mentioned the Indian Books and his intent to publish them. To be included in such a large-scale project was an awe-inspiring prospect, so I put forth my most earnest request to help. Brad has always proven to be the most gracious and widely-inclusive scholar I have known (I believe he enlisted his mother's typing skills on occasion), so he welcomed me with a "Christ, yes! I'd love your help!" which marked my involvement in the project. I was thrilled. My task was to work the typescripts previously produced by graduate students in the 1920s into Brad's own template. From there, he could begin to cross-reference the materials he had compiled in a format that was his own. In total, I transcribed three volumes, Volumes IV, VII, and XI, slowly, over several years.

Through those transcriptions I noticed several things about the sources and topics Thoreau covered. Among those sources featured most prominently were the *Jesuit Relations*, works by Henry Roe Schoolcraft, John Heckewelder, and Samuel de Champlain.[9] Although there is a large range of subjects, for me the passages concerning language stand out. Because Thoreau worked so hard to become a writer, I wondered if what he discovered about the languages of American Indians aided his craft, or his conception of it. In Volume VI, Thoreau wrote that:

> the eloquent savage indulges in tropes & metaphors—he uses nature as a symbol...his metaphors are not far fetched—they are not concealed in the origin of language—but he translates entire phenomena into his speech. He looks around him in the woods...to aid his expression. His language though more flowery is less artificial.[10]

Richard Fleck very helpfully observes that this comment

> seems to be related to two significant Journal entries which restate not only his assertions on the nature of the Indian language but also on the nature of his very own language: [writes Thoreau in Volume X of the Indian Books] "Father Rasles' dictionary of the Abenaki language amounts to a very concentrated and trustworthy natural history of that people, though it was not completed. What they have a word for, they have a thing for...My thought is a part of the meaning of the world, and hence I use a part of the world as a symbol to express my thought" (Fleck 63).

As the primitive man lived close to the land, closer than Thoreau and his contemporaries had, his language might then be a relic as valuable to Thoreau as the arrowheads he found on the shores of Walden Pond, a vital language that had the potential to reinvigorate other languages as the best poetry can. One can imagine that the philosopher-poet would be enriched with such insights.[11] There are scores of instances like this where one can connect a quotation from the Indian books to something Thoreau wrote in his *Journal* or other published works. The insights, in general, however, tend to support ideas Thoreau had already established prior to and during his time at Walden more than they provoked any major new ideas.

Brad said that there were three men in Thoreau's pantheon of "great men": Walt Whitman, John Brown, and Joe Polis. They are the poet, the idealist, and the American Indian. Joe Polis represented to Thoreau an American Indian who could straddle both his heritage and that of the encroaching Europeans and still thrive. It has been noted that while Thoreau found many things to admire in Indian cultures, or primitive man, he certainly was not blind to their shortcomings. Through the Indian Books, it may be possible to glimpse the American Indian culture through the eyes of an acute, detached, and inclusive observer. It is easy to see how Brad's "broken task" was a major one. We look to the day when it will be complete.

[1]See *The Indians of Thoreau: Selections from the Indian Notebooks*, ed. Richard Fleck (Albuquerque: Hummingbird Press, 1974).

[2]See Thoreau's *Journal* entry for October 22, 1857. Thoreau further draws out his point in the entry: "Men should not go to New Zealand to write or think of Greece and Rome, nor more to New England. New earths, new themes expect us. Celebrate not the Garden of Eden, but your own." *Journal*, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), X:118.

[3]Among those cultures other than the American Indians Thoreau covered were the Greenland and Canadian Eskimos, Polynesians, South American Indians, and African and Arabian tribes.

[4]See Walter Harding's *A Thoreau Handbook* (New York: New York University Press, 1959), p. 109, and Robert Sattelmeyer's *Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History with Bibliographical Catalogue* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), specifically the section titled "Aboriginal History."

[5]Richard Fleck included the table of contents in his edition of the Indian Books. He notes that the table of contents appears at the end of Volume I and was

titled "my own" by Thoreau: "Travelling, Physique, Music, Games, Dwellings, Feasting, Food, Charity, Funeral customs, Tradition & history, Morale, Marriage customs, Manufacturers, Education, Dress, Painting, Money, Naming, Government, Treatment of captives, Mariners, Woodcraft, Hunting, Food, Fishing, Superstitions & Religions, Medicine, War, Language, Ind. relics, Arts derived from the Indians."

[6]I am grateful to Connie Baxter Marlow for providing me with a transcription of this lecture. The quotes appear in "The American Evolution: Voices of America," a DVD series of which Marlow is producer. Brad's discussion appears in "Part II: Henry David Thoreau, The Native American, Mt. Katahdin and the Future." The quotations of Brad Dean that follow in this paper were taken from this lecture.

[7]See Lawrence Willson's "Thoreau: Student of Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* n.s., 61, no. 2 (April 1959): 279-289 for more discussion of Thoreau's qualification as an anthropologist.

[8]A topic of frequent scholarly discussion is whether Thoreau subcribed to the concept of the "Noble Savage." Along these lines, it may be useful to note that sometimes Thoreau underlined or otherwise marked passages he copied into the Indian Books that were related to this concept, which perhaps demonstrated his sensitivity to this issue. For instance, in Volume VII, Thoreau copied a passage from the *Jesuit Relations* in which the Indians were referred to as "these poor ignorants." Thoreau underlined the word "ignorants."

[9]For more on Thoreau's use of the *Jesuit Relations*, see Brad's three-part series of articles, "Annotating the *Jesuit Relations*," which appears in the Winter 2003, Spring 2003, and Summer 2003 issues of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*.

[10]I have taken this passage and the one following from Fleck's *Indians of Thoreau*.

[11]See John Aldrich Christie's *Thoreau As World Traveler* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965) for a full discussion of this observation.

# Abstracts of Papers Presented at the Thoreau Society Sessions at the Annual Convention of the Modern Language Association, Held in Philadelphia, December 27-30, 2006

The Modern Language Association's annual meeting in December, 2006, had two sessions sponsored by the Thoreau Society. The following are abstracts of the presentations.

### Session 1: "From Moral Suasion to Sharps Rifles: Transcendental Terrorists?"

**David S. Reynolds, Baruch College, CUNY**
**"Conversion to Violence: The Transcendentalists and John Brown"**

The Transcendentalists' increasing embrace of antislavery violence is signified especially by their sanctification of the era's most violent abolitionist, John Brown. Disgusted by the advance of slavery, the Concord intellectuals dreamed that someone like Oliver Cromwell, one of their historical heroes, would arise and make holy war against social corruption. They regarded Brown, known as "the Cromwell of America," as an inspired warrior against corrupt political institutions in the name of a higher law. They had tried for years to supplant their culture's materialism, conformity, and shady politics with spiritual-minded individualism. For them, John Brown was an actual soldier in the field, fighting for principle. When Brown and twenty-one followers attacked Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859 in an effort to overthrow Southern slavery, the Transcendentalists rescued him from infamy and oblivion by strongly defending him. Their support of Brown outraged the South and inspired the North, exacerbating the sectional tensions that led to the Civil War. The Transcendentalists' involvement with the central political issue of the day, slavery, did not contradict or distract from their interest in nature and philosophy. Precisely the opposite was true: they were among the most radically political figures of their age *because of* their attention to philosophy and nature. Their central philosophical tenets—extreme individualism, nonconformity, and metaphysical idealism—coalesced in their violent reaction to proslavery laws and in their embrace of John Brown, the ultimate nonconformist whom Thoreau called "A Transcendentalist above all, a man of ideas and principles."

**Sandy Petrulionis, Penn State Altoona**
**"Radicalizing America's Town: Antislavery in Concord"**

We all know that Concord, Massachusetts, entered the historical record as a locus of abolitionism, a status conferred largely on the basis of the fiery speeches and writings of its most famous sons, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Yet the blistering rhetoric and itinerant public activism of these two during the late 1840s and 50s is at stark odds with both men's earlier disdain for organized reform. What occurred in this celebrated town over the course of the antebellum era that accounts for such a transformation? The archival record makes abundantly clear that a grassroots reform effort was undertaken and sustained in Concord from the mid 1830s on by an extremist fringe of ordinary residents, including Emerson's and Thoreau's female family members, who conducted a protracted campaign to foment a local abolitionist consciousness. Mary Merrick Brooks, the principal operative in this crusade, has often been cited for her considerable influence on Waldo Emerson's antislavery pragmatism, but her wide-ranging correspondence also testifies to the multi-prong, collaborative strategies through which these women, and a few men, radicalized their town. Especially significant were the ties that Brooks and the other members of the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society forged with national abolitionist leaders such as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips.

And when John Brown carried his fundraising appeal to Concord in March 1857, he did so at the written behest of the female society. By this time, the society also benefited from the labor of a second generation as founders' daughters such as Louisa May Alcott and Ellen Emerson constructed their own identities as abolitionists. Existing histories of Concord and biographies of its illustrious authors have habitually focused on Waldo Emerson's, Henry Thoreau's, and Bronson Alcott's political ideals rather than on the domestic and civic context in which these sentiments evolved. But the archival record crucially expands and enriches this story of community activism. In this historic town, it was militant neighbors—rich and poor, young and old, black and white, and most of all, female and male—who ultimately prevailed on the philosophers of self-culture to transform their theorizing into everyday reform.

**Larry J. Reynolds, Texas A & M University**
**"Louisa May Alcott's *Moods* and Holy Warriors"**

Louisa May Alcott's most profound and fascinating fiction is her novel *Moods*, which subtly addresses key issues of its day, including women's rights, personal responsibility, and the use of violence as political means. Alcott began writing the book in the wake of the hanging of John Brown and completed it in the midst of the Civil War. A close look at her handling of the putative hero Warwick, based on John Brown's arch sympathizer Thoreau, reveals Alcott's reservations about men of principle and righteous violence. After Sylvia first meets Warwick, he's described as "violently virtuous" and "a *masterful* soul, bent on living out his beliefs and aspirations at any cost" (emphasis mine). Although the eighteen-year-old Sylvia is fascinated by him and his manliness, and even contemplates divorce to be with him, her older friend Faith Dane, an obvious ethical agent, warns her against him. A specific instance of his dangerous nature emerges when he attempts to get Sylvia to marry him, ignorant of her marriage to Moor: "You must not fear me, Sylvia," he declares, "else I shall grow tyrannical; for I hate fear, and like to trample on whatever dares not fill its place bravely." Even at the novel's end when Warwick appears to establish himself as a military hero by joining in the struggle for liberty in Italy, Alcott lets him indict himself as he tells Moor that the fire, the smoke, the din "were all delicious, and I felt like a giant, as I wielded that great weapon, dealing many deaths with a single pair of hands." Despite Alcott's own letters indicating her desire to join the Civil War as a soldier, she endows Warwick's heroism with a hypermasculinity that is deadly. Beneath its romantic surface, *Moods* shows Alcott's deep understanding that holy warriors and immature youths are a volatile mixture.

**Respondent: Daniel S. Malachuk, American University**

Were John Brown and the Transcendentalists really terrorists? Some of the panelists suggest so, but there are important arguments to the contrary. Consider these three, all made (in different ways) by Brown, Emerson, and Thoreau. First, the most important antebellum terrorist was not Brown but the United States government, at least until the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation: a nation that supports slavery meets most definitions of a terrorist state. Second, the founding period of the U.S. arguably concluded not with the ratified Constitution in 1789 but with the last of the Reconstruction Amendments in 1870. Brown and his supporters, as they themselves contended, were thus completing the revolution against tyranny initiated in 1776: a revolution fought for the human rights stated in the Declaration of Independence. And, third, the use of violence in defense of human rights is fundamental to social contract theory from Locke forward: Brown and the Transcendentalists also made this argument. "Transcendental terrorists?" is an important question for research, but so also is the Transcendentalists' own answer: no.

> **He is blessed over all mortals who loses no moment of the passing life in remembering the past.**
>
> **"Walking"**

**Session 2: "Transcendentalism in a Time of War"**

**Len Gougeon, University of Scranton**
**"'Only Justice Satisfies All': Transcendentalism and the Rhetoric of War"**

With the outbreak of the Civil War, Ralph Waldo Emerson committed himself to a staunch defense of the Union cause, which he saw as the cause of freedom, equality, and justice. The forceful and even militant rhetoric that Emerson employed in his lectures and addresses in support of the Union are sometimes viewed by scholars as exceptional and a deviation from the generally passive and inward-looking attitudes commonly associated with Transcendentalism. However, an examination of the reform writings of the Transcendentalists as found in the pages of the *Dial* (1840-1844), a journal published by and for Transcendentalists, as well as collections like *Emerson's Antislavery Writings* and Margaret Fuller's dispatches from Europe, reveals a strong element of Transcendental militancy dating back to the early 1840s.

In the four years of the *Dial*'s existence, under the editorship of both Fuller and Emerson, numerous articles were published promoting social reform. Several of these, for example, contained praise for the activists of the French Revolution, and at least one celebrated the notorious Nat Turner as a godly revolutionary. Correspondingly, Emerson in his 1844 "Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies" address celebrated "the arrival in the world of men such as Toussaint, and the Haytian heroes, [and] the leaders of their race in Barbadoes and Jamaica," who participated in a bloody and successful insurrection there. These he saw as prototypes of the long-awaited "anti-slave." Similarly, when Fuller witnessed first-hand the siege of Rome during the Italian Revolution in 1849, she praised the revolutionaries and observed that "wounds and assaults only fire more the courage of [Rome's] defenders. They feel the justice of their cause, and the peculiar iniquity of this aggression." Such examples demonstrate that the Transcendental response to the Civil War, rather than being exceptional, was actually the natural consequence of the movement's longstanding and militant demand for universal social justice.

**Martha Schoolman, Miami University (Ohio)**
**"War, Sacrifice, and the Ethics of Opposition"**

Although it became possible after the end of the Civil War for O. B. Frothingham to refer to the war as a "holy war," and even for Thomas Wentworth Higginson to portray fighting in the war as an essentially "transcendental" experience, Transcendentalism itself has tended to be better remembered for its association with pacifism. This contradiction may be explained away by appealing not only to generational differences within Transcendentalism, but also to the strategic differences between the expansionist and pro-slavery war that preoccupied Thoreau in the 1840s and the Union's antislavery objectives in the war that occupied Higginson in the 1860s. This paper proposes to complicate such a periodizing distinction by attending to the Transcendentalist ethics of opposition that emerged in the 1840s and ultimately managed

to accommodate civil disobedience and military activity within the same philosophical system.

In particular, this paper traces the origin and significance of Emerson's claim in the 1844 West Indies Address that "we are indebted" to the abolitionist movement "for the popular discussion of every point of practical ethics." Whereas "practical ethics" may be expected to signify something akin to the Golden Rule, and thus indicate a retreat from the ethical (some might say unethical) boldness of "Self-Reliance," this paper argues that in Emerson's antislavery writings the ethical lesson of antislavery functions rather as an elaboration of the critique of political association found in "Self-Reliance." A "practical ethics," in other words, does not merely remind us not to oppress others, but also requires us to renounce association with oppressors. This renunciation, in Emerson's antislavery writings, becomes essentially continuous with a call for the privileged to put themselves in the place of the oppressed by making material sacrifices for the sake of the enslaved. Although such a gesture of renunciation may seem nonviolent, in Emerson's *oeuvre*, as well as over the course of the abolitionist struggle more broadly, this ethics of opposition ended up being deeply compatible with the kind of self-sacrificial violence practiced most famously by John Brown. Hovering however at the margins of this inquiry into the ethics of opposition in our own time of war are two important questions: Is it the responsibility of the critic or the responsibility of the Transcendentalist that such an ethics of opposition may be made to encompass violence and non-violence with an equanimity that comes close to resembling "situational ethics"? Does this ethics of opposition slide as effortlessly toward the mechanized logic of sacrifice that characterizes modern war?

**Michael West, University of Pittsburgh**
**"Ambivalent Enlistees: The Transcendentalists' Response to the Civil War"**

In discussing the Transcendentalists and their contribution to American Romanticism, it's common to see the Civil War as marking the end of an era. How could Romanticism survive the photographic realism with which Matthew Brady portrayed the industrial carnage of that bloodiest of all American wars? Didn't the deaths of so many promising young men make the promises of Transcendentalism seem hollow and naive in the aftermath, turning idealists into pragmatists? Hadn't the movement always been pacifistic at the core? Could Transcendental idealism survive firsthand experience with the brutal reality of Civil War combat?

More easily than one might suppose, this paper argued by looking at the reactions of four younger Transcendentalists who served in the Union army. As the only Transcendentalist with a West Point education, William Batchelder Greene's service as Colonel of a Massachusetts artillery regiment guarding Washington did not diminish his eccentric individualism or his fervor for social and economic reform. As Secretary of War Stanton's special deputy with the rank of major, Charles Anderson Dana saw serious combat. During his postwar career as the influential editor of the *New York Sun* he has often been regarded as a Transcendentalist turned cynic in the era of Mark Hanna. But this conventional verdict is wrong, for his championship of the urban working class in the Gilded Age clearly continues the agenda for social reform that he developed as a Fourierist intellectual at Brook Farm, nor was he disillusioned by military experiences that culminated in his being named Assistant Secretary of War. T. W. Higginson likewise regarded serving as Colonel of a regiment of freed slaves in South Carolina as the high point of his life, nor did combat experience change the trajectory of his career as a Transcendental reformer. The neglected minor figure James Kendall Hosmer, who served in the ranks as color-guard for a company that suffered severe losses including his own brother, remained staunchly convinced of the merits of the Union cause that had led him to abandon the Unitarian pulpit and enlist as a corporal. And his postwar career as a teacher, librarian and historian exhibits fidelity to the Emersonian idealism he had imbibed as a youth in Concord and at Harvard. The Civil War did less to breed cynicism and pragmatism than did Darwin, industrialization, and Gilded Age plutocracy—bloodshed alone did not necessarily make it a literary watershed.

**Respondent: Leslie Eckel, Yale University**
**"Alternatives to Transcendental Violence"**

These presentations show that the Transcendentalists have come face to face with the reality of war. The speakers–Len Gougeon, Martha Schoolman, and Michael West–have mapped the tensions between philosophical contemplation and the spiritual and physical violence that troubled the Transcendentalists in the years leading up to the Civil War. My questions in response are these: do the Transcendentalists help us imagine a world in which individuals can take action in ways that are thoughtful yet non-violent, or do they believe that physical force must be used to resolve conflict?

I suggest that we bring another one of the Transcendentalists' heroes–Abraham Lincoln–back into our conversation. Emerson celebrated Lincoln's boldness in his address on "The President's Proclamation" in 1862. To Emerson, Lincoln's decisive gesture was "a poetic act and record" that shot a "jet of thought into [the] affairs" of the Civil War and thereby reshaped the moral landscape of the nation for good. If we allow Lincoln to stand side by side with John Brown the freedom fighter, then that will substantially change how we think about how Transcendentalism works in a time of war. It will also lead us directly into the more non-violent Transcendental philosophy that shaped Gandhi's campaign of *satyagraha* and King's ideological resistance in the civil rights movement. Although many now seek to unleash the political radicalism of the Transcendentalists, I would speak a word for their significant contributions to our vocabulary of non-violent persuasion and for their faith in the difference that a right-thinking individual mind could make in the transformation of the world.

**I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another— I have no sympathy with the bigotry & ignorance which make transient & partial & puerile distinctions between one man's faith or form of faith & anothers—as christian & heathen—**

**Journal, April 1850**

# *In History's Embrace: Past and Present in Concord, Massachusetts*, A Review

***Robert D. Habich***

Leslie Perrin Wilson. *In History's Embrace: Past and Present in Concord, Massachusetts*. Foreword by Doris Kearns Goodwin. Hollis, N.H.: Hollis Publishing, 2007. 125 p.

Few American towns of its size —maybe none—have spent as much time in the historical spotlight as Concord, Massachusetts, the village Henry James called "the biggest little place in America." It's precisely the shaping power of this relentless historicizing, beginning in 1835 with Lemuel Shattuck's *History of the Town of Concord*, that makes Leslie Perrin Wilson's *In History's Embrace* such a tonic, for her anecdotal look at the presence of Concord's past is an argument—albeit a gentle, witty, and graceful one—against the town's mothballed reputation as the home of the American Renaissance or the birthplace of American democracy.

Concord *is* those things, and justly proud of it; as Wilson wryly points out, "When the stakes are as high as credit for national independence, what town does not accentuate its contribution?" (2). As she also reminds us, however, Concord is "a place where people really live and work," defined not by stasis, idealism, and historical firsts but by progress, pragmatism, and the significant actions of the historically less famous (xiii). It is the hometown of Mary Minot, who struggled to get by on her "widow's thirds" in a farmhouse on Virginia Road, not just of her grandson Henry Thoreau who was born there; the place where Rockwood Hoar threw together a study in the courthouse so the beleaguered Emerson could have a place to read after his house burned. Wilson shows us Concordians defining their town and themselves, warts and all. If George Frisbie Hoar called nineteenth-century Concord "as absolute a democracy . . . as was ever upon earth," Harriet Robinson could deride it as "a good place to be born & buried, but a terrible, wearing place for one to live" (quoted, 62, 61).

Culled from Wilson's local-history columns in the *Concord Journal*, the twenty vignettes in this collection reveal the tug-of-war between everyday realities and iconic myth. The great themes of Concord appear in various guises across the centuries and the social spectrum. The tension between spirituality and materialism, for instance, is manifest not just in the writings of the Transcendentalists but in the gentle rises and calming retreats of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and in the desperate shams of Augustus Merrick, the town's Mesmerist. The battle between preservation and commercialization played out not just at Walden Pond but in the proposed 1920s restoration of the Mill Dam à la Colonial Williamsburg and the plan to headquarter the United Nations in Concord.

But *In History's Embrace*, like Concord itself, is about more than intellectual abstractions. The book is populated with memorable characters whose lives take the pulse of the town—obscure visitors like Mrs. Abby Pratt, an attendee at the Concord School of Philosophy in 1887 who wandered off behind the Hillside Chapel, mistakenly nibbled a poison mushroom, and lay unconscious for hours while townsfolk combed the woods for her and (reportedly, at least) the philosophers went blithely on; lifelong residents like William Henry Hunt, who bootstrapped himself into prosperity and left the town the Hunt Memorial Gymnasium; committed reformers like Mary Merrick Brooks, leader of the Concord Ladies' Antislavery Society, whose father had been a slave owner. Some stories tug at the heart, like the account of Bob and Wilkie James, brothers of the novelist Henry, who settled in Concord after their service in the Civil War only to find their ambitions devastated by personal demons and financial problems. Others are told for the sheer fun of telling them, like that of Bob's son Edward, a lifelong Concordian and political activist who managed to be jailed both in Germany and the United States for criminal libel during the World Wars. Equally notorious on the home front, Ned James kept a coffin in his bedroom, played the violin "miserably but enthusiastically," published a manifesto entitled *I Am a Yankee*, and once diverted the Mill Brook into his basement to form a pond "where he kept a frog and a muskrat" (69).

Most Thoreauvians know Leslie Perrin Wilson as the Curator of the William Munroe Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library and will be pleased to find that this carefully researched collection is written with her trademark wit, passion for accuracy, and encyclopedic knowledge of the town and its citizens. *In History's Embrace* is a smart, engaging narrative about Concordians both famous and ordinary who make up the tapestry of life in a town "more accurately viewed as a work in progress than a shrine" (xiv).

Elizabeth Hall Witherell and Leslie Perrin Wilson, October 12, 2007, at the Concord Free Public Library following a talk by Dr. Witherell. The event marked the opening of the exhibition, "Reconstructing Thoreau's World," a collaboration of the Library and the Thoreau Society. The exhibition featuring books, surveys, manuscripts, photographs, and paintings devoted to the landscape surrounding Concord, will remain open until December 31, 2007.

Photograph courtesy Mike Frederick.

# Thoreau's Letters to Blake—How Spiritual Are They?

*Antonio Casado da Rocha and Garrett Barden*

The European Christian tradition, which perhaps originates neither in Europe nor in Christianity, speaks of a reclusive life for "spiritual" reasons—think of the desert fathers, of the hermits, of the monastic tradition. However different it may be from these in its details, perhaps important details, the Buddhist tradition seems to resemble them in its fundamentals. There is removal from the world for the sake of another dimension followed often by a return. The philosopher in Plato who finds his way out of the cave only to return to teach others is structurally the same.

In his letters to H. G. O. Blake, edited by Bradley P. Dean under the title *Letters to a Spiritual Seeker*, Thoreau seems to depart from that tradition. His concern is with how to live in this world; to live differently within it. This way of life is not "transcendent" or "spiritual" as is the monastic ideal. In his introduction to the letters, Brad uses the word "spiritual" as a feature of Thoreau's "vision" of life as a never ending quest for an elusive something that is both "salutary" (that is, healthy) and universal:

> His vision of life as a pilgrimage *toward* the fountainhead of truth is one that many will find salutary. Fundamentally, it is a spiritual vision, and every one of the world's great scriptures articulates it, each in its own fashion. The Way, the Light, the Tao, the Life. These, Thoreau believed, were all one, all Truth—each simply a different articulation of the human sense of the divine, a manifestation of the religious impulse unique to a particular time and place.[1]

Of course, it is not wrong to use the word "spiritual" differently, but because the reader might have the other usage in mind, this might create some misunderstandings. Perhaps we should look at Thoreau not fundamentally as a spiritual teacher, but as a mundane one, more like Montaigne: to see the human world more clearly as it is; the reality being obscured by the demands of "everyday" life; the "social round"; dinners where everyone talks and no one says anything; where the purpose is to "get on"; what Hobbes called "market-friendship" in chapter I of *De Cive*:

> How by what advice Men doe meet, will be best known by observing those things which they doe when they are met: For if they meet for Traffique, it's plaine every man regards not his Fellow, but his Businesse; if to discharge some Office, a certain Market-friendship is begotten, which hath more of Jealousie in it than True love, and whence Factions sometimes may arise, but Good will never.

The friendship between Thoreau and Blake was not such; rather, their exchange shows what Aristotle called "the friendship of virtue," in which friends seek mutual good and not simply mutual advantage. (Aristotle does not think that mutual advantage is bad, only that it is not the only thing.) There are, and always have been, many different ways of living, at least within complex communities; Thoreau is trying to describe a particular kind of everyday life different from that of most of his contemporaries but not for "spiritual" reasons; at least not as the desert fathers or the monastic tradition understands "spiritual."

However, in these letters Thoreau's voice is subtly different from that of his more public writings. He writes in *Walden*:

> I would not have any one adopt my mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible; but I would have each one be very careful to find out and pursue *his own* way, and not his father's or his mother's or his neighbor's instead.[2]

But, in these letters, what he recommends is not only different but thought to be better. It is possible to prefer one way of living to another without thinking that the way one prefers is better than the other. It is, of course, thought better for oneself but not absolutely better. But Thoreau thinks that the way of living that he recommends is absolutely better and hopes to persuade his friend of the truth of this; which he attempts to do by inviting his friend to try to live that way.

As we go on, we have to discover two things: which ways of life are better and which of these we prefer—for it may be that X and Y are equally good absolutely but not equally good for different people. The society in which we are brought up and live provides us with perhaps several ways of living and some may be better or worse than others. But how is this to be discovered? And how long does it take? What is the place of experiment/experience? And what is the place of reading Thoreau and others in the effort of coming to know? These are, in our view, the questions that lead us to the true sense of "spiritual" in this edition of Thoreau's letters.

[1]Henry David Thoreau, *Letters to a Spiritual Seeker* (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 17.

[2]*Walden* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 71.

**What a generation this is! It carries some brains in its hat with a couple of spare cigars on top of them—**

**Journal, September 9, 1850**

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# Toward an Ecology of Reading: A Review of Steven Winspur's *La Poésie du lieu*

*François Specq*

Steven Winspur. *La Poésie du lieu. Segalen, Thoreau, Guillevic, Ponge*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006. 179p.

In this fine, elegantly-written, and refreshing book, Steven Winspur has chosen to address the works of three twentieth-century French poets—Victor Segalen, Francis Ponge, and Eugène Guillevic (with special emphasis on *Stèles* [1912], *Le Parti pris des choses* [1942], and *Motifs* [1987], respectively)—alongside Thoreau's writings, mostly *Walden* and the Journal. To the best of my knowledge, his is a pioneering effort to read Thoreau's poetic prose in the light of contemporary French poetry. It is also convincing, and often illuminating, as Winspur displays a superior command of, and sensitivity to, his authors' works, and aptly juxtaposes and analyzes words and phrases written by these different writers over a 150-year period. Winspur shows that the parallel, far from being arbitrary, actually reflects a common reaction to the alienating world of convention and consumption, and a shared commitment to write texts that have an ethical value: what matters, in Winspur's opinion, is the capacity of the "poetry of place" to redefine the reader's relation to the world. Many Thoreauvians will agree that this was indeed one of Thoreau's central concerns.

As this brief description of the book makes clear, Winspur's purpose is not a conventional comparative literature approach because his readings are driven by what may be called a "militant" approach: through his extended consideration of the texts of these four writers, he actually seeks to define and promote the ways the literature of place manages to reorient our own relation to the world. While it is a genuinely scholarly work, his book thus aims at something beyond scholarship—to draw our attention to texts that purport to liberate ourselves from the social conventions of language and consequently allow us to recover a sense of closeness to the world.

This closeness, argues Winspur, owes much to the involvement of the whole body, and he emphasizes the full materiality of the world, as opposed to its mere visual dimension, in the works of these authors. In this respect, his approach may be broadly defined as phenomenological. However, Winspur is also wary of what he regards as phenomenology's adherence to the primacy of the perceiving subject over the world itself, and its privileged focus on the "horizon" rather than on near reality (hence the insistence on the situated body rather than the distant gaze). He chooses instead to focus on what he repeatedly calls "le réseau des existants naturels" ("the network of existing natural things"), in which humankind is invited to recognize its membership rather than superiority. (I must confess that it is one of the few instances where I found that Winspur's word choice was unfortunate, since the abstract term "existants" seems to contradict the very physicality of things which he means to bring to the fore—I wondered why he didn't simply settle for choses" ["things"], which after all is the word chosen by Ponge in his most famous book, *Le Parti pris des choses*). Winspur thus promotes a reading of Thoreau and his three twentieth-century fellow poets that may be defined as ecocentric, although not anti-humanist, since his chief concern is with the way their texts, rather than offering depictions of places, actually help us "participate actively in the creation of a new dimension of existence" (19).

Such an approach appears to be partly motivated by a discreetly underlying engagement with the two prevailing notions of the natural world: Winspur aims at steering a middle way between a (post-)romantic (or post-theological) interpretation of nature (which emphasizes the relation of place to a reality beyond) and a postmodern understanding of the world (which fails to acknowledge the existence of a reality other than socially-constructed). The first approach dismisses reality as a mere world of appearances which the poet is eager to penetrate, the second dissolves reality in the interplay of linguistic constructions or representations. On the contrary, Winspur argues that Thoreau, Segalen, Ponge, and Guillevic evince a relation to the natural world that acknowledges its "irreducible otherness" (18), a phrase that refers to its physicality and concreteness freed of any quest for its meaning (rather than to its absolute separation from mankind). Winspur celebrates a poetics of place that opposes both romantic sentimentalism and postmodern irony, through a strong emphasis on what he repeatedly calls "la vie," the life of things that call our attention and call on our body—with which our bodies are literally enmeshed. He thus grounds in a kind of universal "vitalism" what may be regarded as an "ecological awareness" of the unity of the world. One of the salient aspects of the book is its focus on the reciprocity of world and text, in the sense that the four writers considered developed a mode of writing that reduces the importance of the enunciator and creates texts that are *analogous* to the poet's experience of the world (Winspur's notion of "text-object")—Thoreauvians may find that *Walden* actually heightens the role of the enunciator, however. In the same line, Winspur celebrates these writers' efforts to promote a sense of place that brackets out any quest for meaning in favor of a joyous, ecstatic feeling of belonging to the world.

Winspur is thus a committed reader of literature, and, to be sure, this militant approach gives his book its power. It is shaped by his unfailing faith in the undying capacity of the best literature to re-enchant the world, not naively, but through mankind's sincere engagement with a reality in which it is inevitably, substantially located, and with which it interacts. The very structure of the book testifies to Winspur's homiletic aspirations: it is not a juxtaposition of four critical essays devoted to four separate writers, but a transversal reading of their writings in order to bring out the "principles" of "a sort of mental and physical training" (19), which is regarded as the core of these "vade mecum or happiness manuals" (161; and see 161-169). Winspur implicitly establishes an equivalence between "reading poetically" (19) and "living poetically," thus outlining what may be called "an ecology of reading."

Each critical approach has its drawbacks, however, and, if I have one criticism to level at Winspur's book, it is that it tends to downplay the differences between the four writers he considers: rather than desiring to understand them in their irreducible singularity, Winspur wants to define through them his own sense of what literature should be, thus collapsing their works as illustrations of a similar understanding of the relations between nature and mankind. Such an approach tends to oversimplify: no room is left for a consideration of Thoreau's interest in science,

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for instance, and Thoreau's sensuality, while undeniable, may be overemphasized at the expense of the spiritual. But Winspur's purpose was not to write a comprehensive monograph on Thoreau, and what he does he does with a subtle sensitivity to Thoreau's poetic achievement. Although one may at times be troubled by phrases that seem to testify to a "return of the repressed" (a romanticized, or even mystical sense of nature), Winspur's inspired recovery of a form of lyricism that tries to rid itself of subjectivity and metaphysics is enlightening. Readers proficient in French would do well to take advantage of Winspur's book to discover the work of these fascinating European poets, broadening their understanding of Thoreau's writings on the way.


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# Notes From Concord

***Michael Frederick, Executive Director***

This fall the Thoreau Society is sending out invitations to encourage former friends and colleagues back into the Society. In this endeavor, we are joined by noted biologist Edward O. Wilson, who sees Thoreau's importance in the initiative to educate the public about the challenges confronting us today.

The Society's mission encompasses many ideals, environmental responsibility among them, so we have a responsibility to educate people about the life, works, and legacy of Henry D. Thoreau. In pursuing this educative endeavor, we recognize the profound ability of Thoreau's writings to change people's perspective, not only about themselves, but about the natural world as well.

We believe that serious interest in Thoreau is on the rise among academics and other enthusiasts alike and so we hope to attract new and former members into the Society. The letter reproduced below is a celebration of our accomplishments as well as a way to encourage new memberships and subscriptions.

**Letter from E. O. Wilson and the Thoreau Society**

We are writing to invite you back into the Thoreau Society. We do so because now more than ever Thoreau's thoughts and values are relevant to the situations that face us. You may believe as we do that his writings have a wonderful capacity to engender individuals to see the world through new eyes.

The Thoreau Society was founded in 1941 by a group led by world-renowned Thoreau scholars Raymond Adams and Walter Harding. We are the oldest and largest organization devoted to an American author. Our members have produced the majority of Thoreau scholarship during the 20th century, and our publications continue to attract and foster top-flight scholarship into the 21st.

Our membership is incredibly diverse, reflecting the varied interests of Thoreau himself. Individuals give a number of reasons for joining the Society, but at the core is a shared interest in learning more about his philosophy and in helping to foster education about his life, works, and legacy. We believe Thoreau's ideas and values empower individuals to meet today's challenges.

> "Though I do not believe a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed. Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders."
>
> — ***Faith in a Seed*, Henry D. Thoreau**

Our organization is mission-driven and member-supported. We conduct programs, excursions, and events throughout the year, culminating in our annual gathering each July in Concord. We own one of the largest collections on Thoreau anywhere, at the Thoreau Institute's Henley Library. Through the Friends of Walden Pond, an activity of the Thoreau Society, we work with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation to help preserve and protect Thoreau's cherished Walden Pond.

Interest in Thoreau has broadened significantly over the past twenty years, especially since the publication of his previously unpublished manuscripts *Faith in a Seed* and *Wild Fruits* by Bradley P. Dean. Today we understand that Thoreau, who rightfully can be called the father of environmentalism, also deserves iconic status in the scientific fields of ecology and biodiversity studies. With the overdue rapid upsurge in public attention to all three of these domains, the study of the Concord master naturalist and preservation of his memory becomes all the more important in history.

We are working diligently to bring teachers, educators, and serious students the tools they need to learn more about one of America's greatest thinkers, Henry D. Thoreau.

Sincerely,

| | |
|---|---|
| Michael J. Frederick | Edward O. Wilson |
| Executive Director | Pellegrino University Professor |
| The Thoreau Society, Inc | Emeritus |
| | Harvard University |

Here's how you can help:

1). Encourage a friend or colleague to join the Society or consider giving them a gift membership.
2). Encourage your local college, university, or public library to purchase a subscription to our publications or consider giving them a gift subscription.

See the enclosed membership card in this issue for more details and consider giving a worthwhile gift.

### *Jim Hayden, Director of Marketing and Public Relations*

The summer crowds and families enjoying the pond have left now, and autumn's bright paintbrush has daubed bright colors here and there along the shore. There is a definite nip in the air most days. As Henry wrote, "All the hills blush; I think that autumn must be the best season to journey over even the Green Mountains. You frequently exclaim to yourself, What red maples!"

As autumn settles in, we are planning our Window on Walden series at the pond. These programs will feature authors, poets and others over the course of the late fall, winter, and early spring. Most events are held on weekends. It is a great way to spend an afternoon sitting by the fire, listening to an engaging speaker, and participating in some good conversation. Please make sure to check our website: www.thoreausociety.org for information on upcoming programs.

This year we have added many new products to bring a bit of the spirit of Walden Pond and Thoreau to you. As we head into the holiday season, please make sure you check out our new gift packages, exciting new products, and our offerings of author-autographed books available through the shop and online. We are also pleased to announce that we now have available DVDs of both the Keynote Address by Scott Russell Sanders and the program by author Thomas Rain Crowe from the 2007 Annual Gathering. They are available individually, or in sets along with books by the two authors.

As our gift to you, we are announcing that until January 31, 2008 you will be able to take advantage of a 15% discount (rather than the usual 10%) on most items available for purchase at our e-commerce store at: www.shopatwaldenpond.org.

When you go to check out, just enter coupon code: mem07 and your discount will be automatically figured into your total.

As always, we welcome you to stop by the shop or give us a call. Please enjoy a safe and healthy fall and holiday season from all of us at The Thoreau Society.

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Elegantly written and filled with surprising insights, Dr. Sperber's book adds a new chapter to our understanding of Thoreau. For those like myself, who have a knee-jerk reaction against psychological reductionism, be reassured—it is this doctor's erudition that makes this medicine go down.

Alan A. Stone, M.D.,
Touroff-Glueck Professor of Law and Psychiatry,
Harvard University

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# Thoreau Society Sessions at the Modern Language Association Meeting, 2007, Chicago

## Session 1: Global Thoreau

Thursday, December 27. 3:30-4:45 p.m.,
Presiding: Laura Dassow Walls, Univ. of South Carolina, Columbia

1. "*Walden* in the Tropics," Jorge Tobias Marcone, Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick

2. "The Church of Keeping Silence: Transatlantic Tranströmer Transmitting Thoreau," Katie Peterson, Deep Springs Coll., CA

3. "Looking through the Oriental Glass: Representation and Allusion in Thoreau's *Walden*," Parvinder Mehta, Univ. of Toledo

## Session 2: "When the Perfect Two Embrace": The Poetry of Fuller and Emerson

Friday, December 28. 7:15-8:30 p.m.
Presiding: Sandy Petrulionis, Penn State Univ., Altoona

1. "'My Inwardness Is Grown Insight': Visions of Selfhood in Margaret Fuller's Poetry," Jeffrey Allen Steele, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison

2. "Trinities and Transcendence in the Ecstatic Poetry of Emerson and Fuller," John Higgins, Univ. of South Carolina, Columbia

3. "Higher Law, Total War: Emerson's Wartime Poetry," Randall Fuller, Drury Univ.

Respondent: Saundra Morris, Bucknell Univ.

## American Literature Association, Annual Conference May 22-25, 2008; San Francisco Embarcadero Center

**Call for Papers**: "Teaching Thoreau in the Twenty-First Century"

We're interested in hearing about innovative ways that instructors are extending the longstanding tradition of making Thoreau relevant for a new generation of college students—this time for technologically savvy "children not left behind" who generally didn't read much Thoreau in high school because their teachers were too busy "teaching to the test."

If you've had recent success with (or are planning) an approach that brought Thoreau's timeless messages (e.g., action with principle, getting vs. earning a living, environmental consciousness) to life for the I-Pod generation, please let us hear from you. Send a brief abstract to Sandy Petrulionis (shp2@psu.edu) and Laura Walls (WallsLD@gwm.sc.edu) by January 10.

# Notes & Queries

We are grateful to the contributors to this issue of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*. **Garrett Barden** is a former Professor of Philosophy at University College, Cork, Ireland; **Antonio Casado da Rocha** is a researcher at the University of the Basque Country, Spain; **Robert D. Habich** is Professor of English at Ball State University and the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Thoreau Society; **Brianne Keith** is a writer and editor from Weymouth, Massachusetts. She has been a member of the Thoreau Society since 1996; **François Specq** is Professor of American Literature and Culture at the Ecole Normale Supérieure Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université de Lyon, France; **Joe Wheeler** is a member of the Board of Directors of the Thoreau Society.

The Thoreau Society received a handsome bequest from the estate of **Sherman B. Zelinsky**, a long-time member of the Society, who died on April 10, 2006. Included in the gift was a first edition of *Walden*. Mr. Zelinsky was a teacher and librarian. He earned degrees from Boston University and the University of Denver and was active in New Hampshire cultural institutions.

**Ed Schofield** sends this chilling report: "It's not only the level of water in Walden Pond that is extremely high these days, but the level of enterococci bacteria as well. Two samples taken from Walden on July 31st—one from the Main Beach and one from the so-called 'Red Cross Beach'—had such high levels of bacteria that all swimming was prohibited early on the afternoon of August 1st. Bathers were told they must leave the water immediately. The Division of State Parks Beaches, which is in the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, had obtained

samples early on the morning of July 31st from six beaches, the two at Walden, two from beaches in the Harold Parker State Forest in North Andover, and two from Salisbury Beach in Salisbury (a salt-water beach). All samples were analyzed less than five hours later. The North Andover samples contained 56 and 21 enterococci per milliliter (ml), those from Salisbury 4 and 12 enterococci per ml, and those from Walden a whopping 292 (Main Beach) and 231 (Red Cross Beach) enterocci per ml! This recalls the days, half a century ago, when Walden Pond was regularly in the news as having the highest 'urine content' among the State's lakes and ponds." Ed also finds in the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* for October 24, 2007, a letter from Matthew Robert, who uses Thoreau to object to a Massachusetts political situation: "Henry David Thoreau, speaking about the California gold rush consuming the nation in the mid-1800s, said, 'The rush to California, and the attitude of merchants, of philosophers, in relation to it, reflect the greatest disgrace on mankind. That so many are ready to live by luck, and so get the means of commanding the labor of others less lucky, without contributing any value to society.' One might guess that his commentary on the proposition of opening casinos in Massachusetts would be much the same."

The *Indianapolis Star* published a blog by **Nelson Goud** on Thoreau in the July 8, 2007, issue.

**Nelson, Sandy Petrulionis, Bob Clarke, Brian Maurer,** and **Corinne Smith** all noted the pair of "Zits" cartoons July 23-24 in which the syndicated cartoon had Jeremy using *Walden* to drive his mother to distraction.

**Jim Dawson** spotted a "Thoreau Wolf Beer Stein" described as "Awesome" on eBay. It drew two bids of $7.49. Jim also found this: "IFURN Furniture is offering a Walden Pond 3-Shelf Bookcase by Valco Furniture on sale now for $621.67 (originally $932.50). You can also get a Walden Pond Twin Platform Bed Set ($1,660.80) and a Walden Pond Twin Bunk Bed Set ($2,372.50)."

**Corinne H. Smith** tells us: "Mystery writer and New Hampshire resident William G. Tapply continues to weave Thoreau quotes and references into his work. His newest book in the Stoney Calhoun series, *Gray Ghost*, includes a moment when his main character, a Maine fishing guide, reflects that Thoreau said 'The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. . . .' Stoney is accompanied by a Brittany spaniel named Ralph Waldo Emerson; in Tapply's primary mystery series, lawyer Brady Coyne's dog is named Henry David Thoreau." Corinne has more: "On April 24, 2007, the final question on 'Jeopardy' was: (category of 19th-century American authors) He wrote, 'I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and spartan-like...' Two of the contestants got the answer right. The third guessed Twain." Finally, Corinne notes that Garrison Keillor three times noted Thoreau, first on July 4, the anniversary of the move to the Pond, then on July 12, Thoreau's birthday, and finally on August 9, the anniversary of the publication of *Walden*.

**Rick Delano** says: "In the Sept/Oct 2007 issue of *Yankee* there's an article entitled 'Beauty and the Best' that features this quotation from Henry: 'All the hills blush; I think that autumn must be the best season to journey. . . .'"

**Mark Sullivan** reports "a Thoreau sighting. In his novel *Windfall* (New York: Villard, 1998), James Magnuson tells the story of an English professor at a small Texas college who discovers a large cache of stolen money, and then has to wrestle with the question of whether to turn the money in to the authorities or use it to supplement his meager income. What makes this fictional professor interesting to Thoreauvians is that he has written an article in the *New England Quarterly*, claiming that Emerson and Thoreau's friendship fell apart because Thoreau had committed some indiscretion with Ralph Waldo's wife Lidian. I can't say more than this, or I'll spoil the novel for anyone who decides to read it."

**Randall Conrad** finds a Thoreau reference in Lillian Ross's 1993 *Picture*, an account of the making of the film *The Red Badge of Courage*. She quotes Arthur Freed: "'Thoreau said most of us lead lives of quiet desperation,' [he] said quickly. 'Pictures should make you feel better, not worse.'"

**Michael Sperber** reminds us that "references to Thoreau are peppered through Jill Lepore's "Vast Designs: How America Came of Age," a review of Daniel Walker Howe's *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America,1815-48* in *The New Yorker* (October 29, 2007), pp. 88-92. In fact, Lepore uses her reading of Thoreau as the structure for the review.

**Barry Andrews** found a French red wine named Walden. The back label reads in part: "In 1854, Henri Thoreau, poet and philosopher, published 'Walden,' an account of his lonely life on a wild lake in Massachusetts." Barry opines that "It is a rustic wine that would go very well, I should think, with woodchuck tartare."

# Treasurer's Report

***Michael Schleifer***

In the two years I have been a member of the Society, an oft-repeated complaint has been the negative tone of the financial report at the annual business meeting. Sometimes that cannot be helped—we are merely being forthright. This year, we have a brighter picture to present, allowing for candor without the gloom and doom.

For the first time in memory, the Society has an operating surplus in the most recent fiscal year, covering the twelve months from April 2006 to March 2007. How did that happen? We merely followed Ben Franklin's admonition. He said to become wealthy you must either augment your means or reduce your wants, but ideally, to do both at the same time.

On the augmenting our means side, income from membership renewals increased nearly 14% last year and is up 40% for the first two months of the current year, with new memberships double the same two-month period in 2006. Bob Clarke and Mike Frederick are continuing a campaign to contact lapsed members to bring them back into the fold.

The Shop at the Pond has contributed over $17,000 to our bottom line each of the past two years, no small task last year with a 5% drop in sales. Kudos to Jim Hayden and his staff for running an even leaner operation than before. Sales are up substantially for the first three months of this year as well, so they are augmenting means and diminishing costs at the same time. Well done!

Activities like raffles and the on-line auction help as well, but by themselves these sources cannot cover the costs of programming.

In fairness, the surplus—you remember the surplus I mentioned earlier—was due in large part to the receipt of a $100,000 bequest from the estate of John Mack. Without this one-time infusion of cash, we would have run a deficit. Even so, it would have been $20,000 less than the previous year. The budget for the current year projects a deficit of $50,000, almost half that of two years ago. We still have some way to go for a balanced budget, but we are moving in the right direction. In addition, the finance committee has charged management with the task of further reducing the deficit by 50% for the second half of fiscal year 2008 (the twelve months ending March 31, 2008), with the objective of reducing the annual deficit to $25,000 the following fiscal year.

Last year I said that we need multiple sources of funds to pay for our programs. For any entity, non-profit or for-profit, to achieve financial stability, consistent **renewable** sources of income must be maintained. In an organization such as ours, the primary source has to be our membership. Why? We provide benefits to our members primarily, and only to a lesser extent to the general public.

It is not easy to ask for money, and many of us are uncomfortable with the task. Tom Potter and Mike Frederick are both to be commended for their seemingly endless creativity in finding new ways to raise funds. These efforts, the increased revenues I spoke of earlier, and the cost cutting implemented in the past couple of years, have us moving in the right direction. Ultimately, though, we still must count on ourselves, the membership, if we are going to continue our programs.

In an ideal world, we would have a large enough investment fund to produce income to cover a good portion of our costs. John Mack has started us in that direction. To move closer to that idea, what I ask is that, in addition to the great support you provide from year to year, that you consider remembering the Society through planned giving. As a teacher and a parent, I have learned not to ask of others what I am not prepared to do myself, so I want you to know that at least two current Board members have named the Society in either their wills or through charitable trusts. While we all may not be in a position to be as generous as John Mack, even a modest bequest can help the Society to continue its mission. Our financial mission is to build an endowment sufficient to provide annual investment to cover a significant portion of our annual operating budget.

I hope you will take my words to heart and that we will continue to move toward financial stability in the immediate future.

**Special Tax Planning Opportunity for Year-End Charitable Gifts**

When considering a year-end gift to the Thoreau Society, please note that a provision of the tax law due to expire at the end of 2007 allows individuals over 70 ½ to make contributions directly from their IRA accounts to qualified charities. The tax advantage of this arrangement is that the distribution will not be included in the taxpayer's income. This can greatly benefit individuals who will lose tax benefits if their income (AGI) increases and those individuals who do not itemize deductions and thus get no tax benefit from a charitable contribution. Since each taxpayer's circumstance is different, please consult your tax advisor.

**The Thoreau Society, Inc.**
**BALANCE SHEET**
**as of March 31, 2007**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Assets** | | |
| Cash | $23,363 | |
| Cash-Friends of Walden Pond | 21,307 | |
| Accounts Receivable Program Services | 5,877 | |
| Inventory | 51,475 | |
| Prepaid Expenses | 5,083 | |
| Total Current Assets | | 107,105 |
| Property and Equipment at cost | 6,777 | |
| Leasehold Improvements | 43,240 | |
| | 50,017 | |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation | (48,620) | |
| Total property, equipment & leasehold improvements | | 1,397 |
| Long term investments | | 353,339 |
| Organizational Endowment Fund | | 6,781 |
| Other Assets-Deposits | | 150 |
| Total Assets | | $468,772 |
| **Liabilities** | | |
| Accounts Payable | $18,621 | |
| Accrued Expenses | 2,240 | |
| Total Current Liabilities | | $20,861 |
| **Net Assets** | | |
| Unrestricted | | |
| Investment in Property and Equipment | 1,397 | |
| Board Designated | 346,028 | |
| Operating | 63,762 | |
| Total Unrestricted Assets | 411,187 | |
| Restricted | | |
| Temporarily Restricted | 33,748 | |
| Permanently Restricted | 2,976 | |
| Total Restricted Assets | 36,724 | |
| Total Net Assets | | 447,911 |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | | $468,772 |

Note: The Society's collections are not capitalized and therefore do not appear on this statement.

Visit the Society's e-commerce site
**www.shopatwaldenpond.org**

# Thoreau Farm Trust Assumes Ownership of the House In Which Thoreau Was Born

*Joe Wheeler*

On November 20, Town of Concord officials transferred ownership of the house in which Thoreau was born to the Thoreau Farm Trust for the sum of $1. This carried out the agreement signed three years ago between the Trust and the Town to transfer the eighteenth-century farmhouse and two acres of land once the Trust had raised significant funding toward the structure's restoration. Fundraising for the project has now passed $700,000, with another $300,000 needed to complete the job.

With ownership, the Trust will now proceed with construction activities. When the job is finished, it is expected that the Thoreau Society will establish its international headquarters in three rooms on the west side of the second floor, right across from the room where Thoreau was born in 1817. Preliminary work by the Trust's historic architect has uncovered wood paneling, flooring, and plaster in the birth room which dates back to the original construction of the house in about 1730.

The legal documents were signed by Lucille Stott, President of the Trust. Mike Frederick, executive director of the Thoreau Society, is on the Trust's Advisory Board and regularly attends board meetings as a liaison to the Society. Joe Wheeler and Lorna Mack serve on both the Thoreau Society and Thoreau Farm Trust boards.

The Trust wishes to thank all those who have contributed to this effort, including many members of the Thoreau Society. Of course, the Trust and the Thoreau Society will not be able to occupy space in the house until the job is complete and for this more funds are needed. If you wish to learn more about the project, please visit the Trust's website at www.thoreaufarm.org. Contributions can be made through the website or sent to Nancy Grohol, Executive Director; The Thoreau Farm Trust; Box 454; Concord, MA 01742.

Don Linebaugh lecturing at the Concord Free Public Library, November 10.

Photo: Michael Frederick

Bill Joyce, Kristina Joyce, Kay Schwie, and Dale Schwie at the Thoreau conference held in Minneapolis, October, 2007. Kristina Joyce, a Concord artist, donated fifteen items to the Nineteenth Century American Studies Collection, part of the Special Collections of the Minneapolis Public Library.

Photo: Susan Mackert

**Please submit items for the Fall *Bulletin* to your editor before January 15, 2008**

**Thoughts accidentally thrown together become a frame—in which more may be developed—& exhibited. Perhaps this is the main value of a habit of writing—of keeping a journal. That so we remember our best hours—& stimulate ourselves. My thoughts are my company— They have a certain individuality & separate existence—aye personality.**

***Journal*, January 22, 1852**

**www.thoreausociety.org**

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Established in 1941, the **Thoreau Society, Inc.**, is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to honor Henry David Thoreau by stimulating interest in and fostering education about his life, works, and philosophy and his place in his world and ours; by encouraging research on his life and writings; by acting as a repository for Thoreauviana and material relevant to Henry David Thoreau; and by advocating for the preservation of Thoreau Country. Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly) and *The Concord Saunterer* (published annually). Society members receive a ten-percent discount on all merchandise purchased from the Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the Annual Gathering.

**Membership:** Thoreau Society, 55 Old Bedford Road, Concord, MA 01742, U.S.A.; tel. (978) 369-5310; fax: (978) 369-5382; e-mail: info@thoreausociety.org.

**Merchandise (including books and mail-order items)**: Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond, 915 Walden Street, Concord, MA 01742-4511, U.S.A.; tel: (978) 287-5477; fax: (978) 287-5620; e-mail: info@shopatwaldenpond.org; Website: www.shopatwaldenpond.org.

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